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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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(406) 243-2522

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UM RESEARCHER REPORTS DIP IN LUMBER, PLYWOOD PRODUCTION

MISSOULA --

Second quarter 1995 lumber and plywood production in Montana's forest products industry was down from first quarter 1995 levels while production employment was up slightly, reports a researcher with The University of Montana's Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

The lower production levels can be attributed to weak lumber markets, which caused slowdowns at some Montana mills, said Charles Keegan, the bureau's director of forest industry research. An April strike at a Thompson Falls sawmill also impacted employment and production, he said.

In cooperation with the Montana Wood Products Association, the bureau compiled quarterly figures for the 26 plants responsible for more than 90 percent of the state's total output of wood and paper products.

"Employment remains about 100 workers below 1994 levels, but lumber markets have improved and some of that employment may be regained in the last half of 1995," Keegan said.

Second quarter 1995 employment figures show a slight increase from the previous quarter, averaging 4,705 workers, up from a first quarter 1995 average of 4,692, he said. Production workers' wages were \$38.1 million in the second quarter of 1995, relatively unchanged from \$38.2 million in the first quarter.

Montana sawmills produced about 306 million board feet of lumber in the second quarter of

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1995, down from 325 million board feet in the first quarter of 1995, Keegan said. Lumber prices, which declined about 16 percent between the first and second quarters of 1995, were largely responsible for the lower second quarter production, he said.

Plywood production at Montana mills was 149 million square feet in the second quarter of 1995, slightly lower than first quarter levels of 152 million square feet, Keegan said.

The above figures refer only to production workers at timber processing facilities and plants processing wood fiber residue from timber processing facilities. These production workers account for 40 to 50 percent of the workers in Montana's forest products industry. Estimates do not include the several thousand workers in logging, trucking, and other related jobs.

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Contact: Charles Keegan, (406) 243-5113.

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